

CHAPTER 11

MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATION DURING THE TIMES OF INTERREGNUM

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Introduction. Journey into the unknown

The greatest tasks, so those whose completion pushed human development, were the tasks that required cooperation. It remains true to this day, with a significant difference in that cooperation required today is cooperation that Richard Sennett (2013) calls difficult. In contrast with simple, tribal cooperation that engages people similar to us in activities for the success of our group, tribe, or nation, difficult cooperation requires the involvement of various groups, culturally, ethnically or religiously disparate. Sennett claims that only global cooperation will allow us to deal with the greatest challenges of the modern world.

These challenges are regarded as more difficult than anything we have experienced so far, even though they concern virtually the same areas. Since time immemorial, human beings have tried to establish their relationship with their environment: once, in the popular narration, men harnessed it, used its riches, nowadays, increasingly often they try to prevent the disaster they had caused. It is a catastrophe that threatens our existence. Another challenge, present since the dawn of time, has been explaining the world and choosing a development strategy. Religion and science are the main tools used for this purpose, but today they often fail – they do not provide simple solutions, quite the opposite, they complicate things even more. The third group of challenges has been the necessity to deal with oneself and one's own fears. Who am I, and who are others? The answers to these basic questions have created our identity, and combined with the apprehension of strangers and conviction that inequalities are natural, they have determined people's lives.

Today, the main interpretations of reality, great narratives and dominant so far visions of social development based on the abuse of nature, differences between people, competition, and conflict, are shaken to the foundations. We have understood that what not long ago had been enough for us to deal with reality, lost its relevance. According to Zygmunt Bauman, we live in the times of interregnum – a moment in history when old ideas no longer work, but the new ones

have not yet arrived (2017). It is a consequence of the collapse of the vision of the world, economies, and societies of continuous growth and development. With increasing clarity and despair we come to realise how unstable is today's model of social relationships.

Jeremy Rifkin (2016) announced the close fall of capitalism, but he insists that a different world, based on a community of cooperation and motivated by common interest, is possible. When the ideas that change the world emerge? How to deal with the lack of ideas or, even worse, the fear of creative approach to one's lot? What tools can prove useful in the task of constructing the world? How to conduct a debate about such theses as, for example, the one presented by Rifkin? Among various possibilities, we would like to emphasise the meaning of education and management. Education is a process that enables people to understand more, become better, and more efficient. Thanks to education (and work) people manage to overcome their own limitations and develop in an often unexpected ways, which results in social solutions that could not have been predicted some time before (particularly when education occurs in a group). Whereas, thanks to management, the nowadays popular form of human existence and the way of constructing society and knowledge, we know more and more about the specificity of how people function in organisations (Czarniawska, 2010).

The objective of this article is sketching a broader context which, as we believe, should nowadays constitute a point of reference for the way of thinking about directions of the development of educational management in schools, because without reacting to reality, management becomes a set of empty rituals, instead of a mechanism of handling challenges. Describing the context, we will refer to the selected major aspects of the contemporary world, that impact the condition of the world and the human condition, postulating mindful, responsible actions that take into account precisely these aspects in all management and educational management initiatives.

Challenges. The end or the beginning?

The conversation about the future and new ideas for the organisation of social, economic, cultural, and political life cannot happen without a reference to the context in which this life is led. We are living in the world which many scientists, philosophers, and commentators whom we will invoke in the subsequent parts of this article, judge rather harshly. In relation to the Western civilisation, it can be considered a paradox, since nowadays people live longer, healthier and in better conditions than ever before; they earn and eat more, rarely suffering from wars and other conflicts or famine and destructive plagues. The progress of technology enables things that were even quite recently difficult to imagine, for

instance in medicine – restoring sight and hearing, thought-controlled prosthesis, or reviving extinct species. Many diseases that used to decimate populations in the past disappeared, average life expectancy increased, and child mortality decreased by 40% between 1990 and 2012. In 1962, 41% of children did not attend school, now the percentage dropped below 10% (which is still too high). A not inconsiderable number of people worldwide live in a richer and safer world, but they are not content (Bregman, 2017, pp. 5-10).

We believe that the situation is bad, because our very diverse ambitions are enormous. On the one hand, the new kind of hunger, different than in the past because shaped by marketing experts not needs, hunger of total consumption, drives production. On the other hand, there is also a hunger for justice which drives the desire for a better life not only in terms of consumption, but also freedom, brotherhood and sisterhood, equality, etc. We cannot handle it, because we ran out of ideas for the future, and it is equally difficult to accept the fact that the vision of the future must be filled with something. Simply “more” or “cheaper” is not enough. Such solutions are over, and besides, we can see that in the world richer than ever before, millions of people still live in poverty. Even though we could resolve the issue of poverty here and now, we brought about a situation in which some people bask in unimaginable luxury, while others fight for their survival. We have great expectations, but we must eventually understand that without a fair vision, everything we have achieved is the progress of technology, not civilisation. Nowadays, politics is limited to crises management, voters vacillate between parties offering solutions that differ from one another only marginally, universities resemble factories where there is no time for reflection or debate, and freedom means the right to advertise rather than the right to express your opinions (Bregman, 2017). So even though things are better, we still see that they are bad, and we sense it in an unprecedented way. Things are so bad that we are afraid to talk about it – and we do not acknowledge the alarming data.

Negative phenomena cumulate in the areas mentioned above:

- in the natural environment, the ecosystem that permits our existence, and whose devastation brought us to a point where we started to wonder how much time humans have left on Earth.
- in the social environment, where catastrophic inequalities and deficits of justice destroy the possibility of sustainable social development which gives us a chance for survival not in the biological sense, but as people who can function only in society, in groups.
- in interpersonal relationships in which the fear of the unknown, i.e. closing yourself to diversity and otherness, generates the threat of armed

conflicts, terrorism, and also a humanitarian disaster related to the migration of enormous numbers of refugees.

An exceedingly concerning state of the natural environment, or more aptly: an environmental mega-crisis caused by our industrial civilisation and as a result of the emergence of new cities and agricultural areas along with chemical agents used in agriculture, is particularly visible in global warming, loss of biodiversity, and excess nitrogen. It inspires asking the question: when will we be forced to pay for this? Estimations vary: from irresponsible positions of certain politicians who do not believe in the threat and ignore it, to opinions of scientists who indicate the period until the end of the 21st century as the time we have left to change something, to those who prophesise an impending disaster soon, in 20-30 years, because we have already passed the point of no return (Pinchbeck, 2017; Klein, 2016).

The social environment, another area where serious challenges accumulate, is subject to erosion as well. For some time now, scientists have been raising the alarm, indicating how dangerous current inequalities have become for societies and nations. Societies that allow their own expansion, believing it is “healthy” for their development, are facing greater social threats, higher costs, and lower quality of life (Wilkinson, Pickett, 2011). Among scientists who raise the alarm on the subject of perpetuating inequalities by an unfair accumulation of capital, we should invoke the most quoted economist of the 21st century, Piketty, who leaves no doubts as to the possibility of people born into less affluent families becoming richer. The division into financial winners and losers was made a long time ago, and now it only deepens – the share of capitalists in the overall income will only grow, and the rest will be left with less and less (Piketty, 2014).

This unfair social reality has long since undermined the foundations of the social contract that enabled the existence of modern societies, although due to manipulations, socialisation and media, the message has not reached public awareness. Merciless markets, continuous economic growth, unfair taxes, immoral corporations in pursuit of profits, or the arrogance of owners are not responsible for the crisis, unequal distribution of goods, or endangered pension systems; according to these powerful opinion-forming forces, it is strangers who try to seize our way of life and our goods that are to blame for everything.

The third discerned area, where we can indicate serious challenges for modernity, is the area of identity, relationships with others, and the awareness of development opportunities. Who are we as people, as individuals, as groups in society? Admittedly, we gained more freedom to individually define our own identity and it seems that eventually an enormous diversity of human identities was accepted (in terms of skin colour, ethnic, cultural, or political affiliation, sexual orientation, beliefs, diet, religion, wealth, leisure, career model, or lifestyle),

yet at the same time a strong opposition to the fragmentation or atomisation of society is visible. Recent years mark the return of the popularity of nationalisms as well as the focus around the idea of a strong state or homogenous cultures, which can be a reason for concern if we consider diversity to be a value, and attempts at communication and cooperation between cultures as something desirable. It is alarming, but the bitter reflection on the vanishing interpersonal bonds, solidarity, or trust has been present in popular discourse about the state of public affairs for some time.

We are witnessing a crisis of thinking, imagination, and the crisis of the model of social development (production, consumption, leisure), resulting from the interaction between the liberal democracy and capitalism (Bauman, Bauman, Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, 2017). Are we the witnesses of the end of history, or the end of humanity? Climate, environmental, economic, political, and social problems intertwine. For instance, burning fossil fuels is a social, economic, and cultural problem, which makes finding a solution extremely difficult, but remaining within the circle of familiar solutions leads to an inevitable disaster. What we need today is a radical transformation of the vision of society, labour, and production.

Yes, we do live in the times of interregnum – a period that heralds something new, but as yet unknown – the old has not left, although it has ended, and the new has not yet arrived, although it has begun. It is a dangerous period, the time of stagnation and strife, but the crisis of legitimacy does not mean only the collapse of the old order, but also the time of new opportunities. It will be difficult, but it is worth trying to assume that when we lose something important to us, it would be enough to take a step in any direction to see the problem from a different, broader perspective, and it becomes immediately visible that instead of wasting time, we should become involved in the work for the new, always referring to moral values – once again connect labour with morality (and not only profit). Andrzej Leder (2016) believes that a profound change of the global order and valuation system is possible, but we must not ignore human rights, as we are responsible for the community, empathy, and global economy. The European community has always been founded on the consensus that the common good can be more important than the good of one of the member states.

The intellectual appeal of the capitalist system has worn out, and with increasing clarity, it becomes visible that it is nearing its end. The already mentioned Jeremy Rifkin (2016) argues that a new economic paradigm is slowly taking shape, based on the community of cooperation and the zero marginal cost revolution visible even today in the publishing industry, ITC, entertainment, education, or in research showing the possibilities of obtaining clean energy. The key role in these transformations is played by the new technological platforms –

the Internet of Communication and the Internet of Energy – the Internet of Things. However, we should still keep in mind that new technologies are a promise of a better future, but only if accompanied by the changing mental models, our intellectual software which helps us to function. Otherwise, the technological revolution as well will introduce a division into winners and losers, and profits will not be enjoyed by all. So far, even if new technologies are being implemented, they do not necessarily bring the expected results. Besides, a new group of the excluded emerged, consisting of those excluded from the technological transformation. New economy created new poverty. For instance, it was remarked that while in modern sectors wages increased by ca. 12% in the span of a decade, traditional sectors noted a ca. 4% decrease.

That is why today, the change of attitudes and shaping adequate competences is necessary. One of the interesting problems is the issue of differences between people and the effects of these differences visible in access to education, jobs, decent wages, health, happiness. Today a belief is being created that in order to be happy, you have to have more, more than yesterday, more than others. You have to own things. Private property is much more popular than the shared, public property. Can sharing with others bring happiness? Can property take another form? Is it possible to be happy and earn as much as others? How to avoid the continuous pursuit of material goods and instead focus on oneself and one's relationships with others? How can we not expect that someone will solve our problems and by self-governance take up the challenge of taking responsibility for the world?

Education and management. Unfulfilled promises

In the process of development, humans worked out certain – varying, depending on the era – intellectual tools which for years have been useful in managing everyday tasks and more ambitious visions of the future. At this point, we would like to refer to education and management – systems which helped to efficiently get ready and solve problems of everyday, social, economic, and political life. It is generally believed that education plays an important role in the process of becoming a human being, that is individual development; in socialisation, that is becoming a member of society thanks to acquiring appropriate social and cultural competences; in the acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge, that is becoming a valuable, competent employee; and in the process of developing the competence of critical reflection on oneself and the world, in order to be able to improve it (Łuczyński, 2011). These functions of education bring the expected result when the necessary balance between them is successfully maintained. Similarly to education, management involves people's actions. It is sup-

posed to enable people to make a joint effort, make their strengths as effective as possible, and their weaknesses insignificant. Like in the case of education, management is a deeply cultural activity, rooted in culture and dependent on it. Management requires shared values and goals, communication and responsibility, learning of everyone involved, and these factors lead to achieving measurable results of actions (Drucker, 2008, pp. 23-24).

For years, education and management have been taking a hegemonic position in the process of dealing with reality, which in a sense contributed to a certain calcification of the concept, and even certain arrogance toward problems which societies had to face. Education consisted mainly of transferring information packages and training specific competences. Management was considered to be a managerial activity or managing resources and people (Kożuch, 2005). Despite increasing expectations, it was possible to also note a growing frustration due to unsatisfactory outcomes of considerable funds invested in education (Dumont, Istance, Benavides, 2013), and in management (Mickletwhait, Wooldridge, 2000). Both education and management started to lose trust and respect, also due to increasingly visible problems in dealing with social, economic, and political dilemmas concentrated around tensions between what is rational and what is irrational, qualitative and quantitative, inclusive and excluding, democratic and autocratic, ordered and chaotic, individual and organisational, between imagination and tradition, change and status quo, and finally, competing objectives: work and good life. The collapsing traditional narrative led to a crisis of education and management, as well as kindling the idea that many problems cannot be solved by schools or managers, as they do not have sufficient knowledge or responsibility. Nowadays, management, in its classic form, loses relevance and academics argue whether it has any role to play in the future (Bauman, Bauman, Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, 2017). Both education and management can impact the world of the future by building beliefs and mental models, reinforcing certain values or building relationships between people.

How then can we ensure our own prosperity and happiness, while including others in it, and not leaving anyone to their own devices? From hundreds of alternative routes of development of individuals and societies, how do we choose one which will be our own, and at the same time the best one for everyone – and then successfully follow it? Those who ask themselves such questions are the people who realise that they determine their own lives and the shape of the world. The question about which choice to make, or how to do something, is a result of maturing, the process of understanding who is responsible for our world. It is a painful process of coming to terms with the fact that we are the ones responsible for the way we live our lives. Starting with private, personal matters, understanding oneself, closer and more distant relationships, choices

made regarding macro matters, social matters, political, economic, and cultural choices; it is we who – in a certain socio-cultural context, having some economic, human, cultural, and relationship capital, but still we – shape reality. We, so also various social institutions that we set up: value systems, thought models, systems and organisations such as school, which formally order the process of education. And although it is difficult to argue nowadays that the future will be what the school is today, because as we know, reality is complicated and no single factor can determine it on its own, school, or more broadly speaking, education belongs to the set of the most crucial factors that determine the future. What kind of education is capable of changing the world? It is an issue worth considering, starting from the assumption that describing the world without the intent to remedy injustice is profoundly unethical.

We are convinced that we are in a place we can leave and move forward only when we “reinvent” objectives, values, and actions. We believe that we are obliged to take action which will at least delay these unfavourable tendencies, especially those connected with the dramatic state of the environment. In our opinion, the list of priorities for education today, and as such for management in education as well, should include:

- environmental education – with reliable knowledge derived from scientific research on the state of our planet and what we should all do to care for it here and now.
- learning in cooperation.
- learning empathy, respect, and trust as the fundamental values.
- understanding and supporting diversity.
- rejecting competition as a main form of the interaction.
- promoting the value of education.
- levelling chances, equal opportunities.
- learning reflexive action.
- learning how to be active.
- educational programmes for adults (children’s parents, local communities) including, among others, the issues listed above.

We believe that these actions, despite having a utopian ring to them, are indispensable to facing the challenges of the contemporary world. Although, of course, they are not sufficient, and in no way do they constitute a panacea, a complete list of solutions. Most of these actions we suggested to schools and other institutions as an element of two projects executed by the Institute of Public Affairs in the years 2009-2015, concerning pedagogical supervision and educational leadership, placing particular emphasis on formulating the canon of values which should, in our opinion, serve as a basis for the development of

schools and pedagogical supervision (Dorczak, Kołodziejczyk, Kołodziejczyk, Mazurkiewicz & Shaw, 2016; Kołodziejczyk, 2016).

As Jan Łuczyński argues, educational management should be primarily oriented on the execution of the fundamental role of the school, which is supporting each student's individual development. The achievement of this goal is supposed to be supported by performing all managerial actions: planning, organising, coordinating or leading, monitoring (Łuczyński, 2011, p.102). The listed priority tasks for education are therefore also tasks for educational management. The challenge is to manage in such a way as to enable their realisation. So, educational management must move away from the attempts to transfer ideas from other domains of human activity and reinvent itself from scratch, referring to democratic values and focusing around the context described in this article.

Admitting that we need schools to change is just the first step of that change. As managers and educators we need to lead a conversation across our communities. We need teachers to lead the public debate so that it avoids the inevitable trivialisation, in order not to focus the discussion on administrative structures, new buildings, technology, or textbooks. We need a new narrative of learning and teaching, of management, to propose the new paradigm of education, in which education would no longer serve to reconstruct the existing reality, but to impact society in the transformation process. It is our, educators, responsibility to help society to understand the broader role of school and its ties to social development not understood only as economical growth.

Awareness of contemporary challenges cannot remain only in the sphere of a sad reflection on the fate of the world and the human race, but according to us, it should constitute a point of reference for building a community of learning, for managing school and learning processes. The purpose of this article is the presentation of reflections on the most essential question of every human endeavour: why do we do it? Only when one is aware of the answer to this question, there is a chance for reasonable action, providing opportunity for genuine change and success. Educational management should be therefore planted in the social ecosystem of the school, oriented on the one hand on the development of the individual, and on the other hand – on the development of the entire school and local community in which the school operates. We should strive for a transformation of the social life that will serve decreasing social inequalities and at the same time creating conditions for a good life for everyone (Mazurkiewicz, 2012). In our view, management concepts and methods favourable to educational management are those that accentuate participation and inclusion of various school entities in management processes, focus on cooperation and shared, negotiated values, based on which a common concept of school and its management is built. Maybe it is not too late.

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